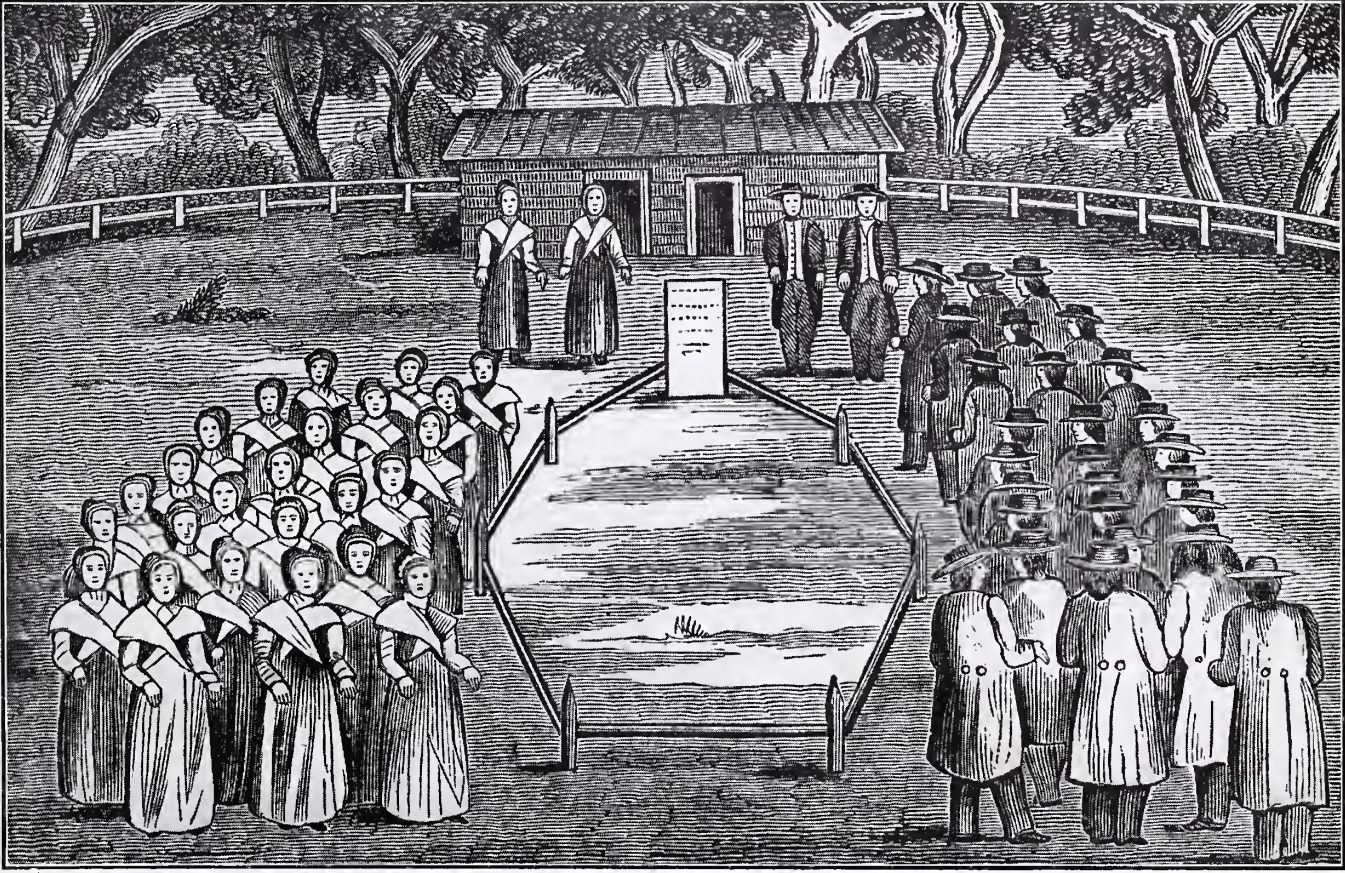


Dance Index

a new magazine devoted to dancing



The Dance in Shaker Ritual

E. D. Andrews



Upper right: A Shaker dancing. Colored lithograph by Thomas Worth in *The Judge*; June 1883. This satire on ecclesiastical attacks against dancing refers to the puritan comment that dancing alone or apart was permissible, but that mixed, ungodly.

Museum of Modern Art Dance Archives

Dance Index

a new magazine devoted to dancing

Editors

BAIRD HASTINGS
LINCOLN KIRSTEIN
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Comment

While *Dance Index* is primarily occupied with the uses to which dancing has been put in theatres, nevertheless, from time to time we will publish articles outside the strict realm of stage spectacle. As may be seen from Mr. Andrews' study, the Shakers eventually presented their rites as shows to be seen by audiences, with careful regard to music, floor-pattern, gesture, and even costume. The Shaker remains are a rich source for future creation. Sooner or later there will be a dance work employing their songs, as Aaron Copland remembered cowboy ballads in "Billy the Kid." Charles Weidman and Doris Humphrey in 1931 presented "The Shakers: Dance of the Chosen," a work freely based on this material.

Edward Deming Andrews is also the author of "The Gift to be Simple: Songs, Dances and Rituals of the American Shakers" (1940), and the authority in a field he has made almost uniquely his own. Mr. Andrews has organized notable exhibitions of Shaker Art, at the Whitney Museum of American Art,

at the Berkshire Museum in Pittsfield, and in other places. He has fought for the preservation of Shaker furniture, songs, architecture and handicrafts, with little help from the ordinary historical societies or outside aid. His desire is to establish in Western Massachusetts a permanent reconstruction of their activities, of which he has formed a magnificent collection. The Shakers are a fine example of the functional puritanism which is the source of what is most perfect in North American culture.

Paul Magriel, Curator of The Museum of Modern Art Dance Archives, and one of *Dance Index's* editors, is now a private attached to Flight 216, 594 School Squadron at the Air Corps Technical School, Keesler Field, Mississippi. Richard Pleasant, former director of Ballet Theatre, Demetrios Vilan, Alfred Brooks of Hanya Holm's company, Harry Coble, a former Shawn dancer, and Joseph Lane of the American Ballet are all in the Army.

Cover: Mountain Meetings. Wood-cut by an unknown artist. From David R. Lamson, "Two Years' Experience among the Shakers," 1848.

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The Dance In Shaker Ritual

by E. D. Andrews

During the first years of the Revolutionary War rumours were frequent, in the country around Albany, New York, of a small band of English colonists, five men and four women, who practised a strange kind of religion in the swampland country of Niskeyuna, a few miles northwest of the town. During the day, it was said, these people were busy clearing and tilling the land, building cabins and working at the forge and loom; but the evenings, far into the night, were spent in rapturous singing and dancing. One of the number, the story went, professed to be a second Christ whose mission was to redeem the world.

These reports were first verified by two young men, disillusioned subjects of a New-Light revival in New Lebanon, N. Y., who, journeying westward in the spring of 1780, stopped one night at the cabin in the wilderness. Hospitably received by the leader of the colony, 'Mother' Ann Lee, a native of Manchester, England, the travelers learned that these poor but industrious folk were called Shakers, or Shaking Quakers: that she, the prophetess Ann, believed that the Christ spirit had made its second appearance in and through her, ushering in the awaited millennium; that the Shakers, having confessed their wrongs, repudiated marriage and for-

saken all 'carnal' practices, held themselves to be without sin; that they proposed to found in America a religious order separated from the world; and that they welcomed into this communion all who were sick of futile creeds, formal worship and the evils of a corrupt society. After witnessing the ecstatic 'exercises' of the 'foreigners,' the visitors, deeply affected, returned to New Lebanon convinced that the promises of the revival, about which they had despaired, were about to be fulfilled.

New England, under the influences of Jonathan Edwards' preaching and the Great Awakening, was fertile ground for programs of salvation. It was the exalted worship of the 'convulsioners,' however, more than any other aspect of the Shaker faith, that aroused the curiosity of the world. This was so strangely rhapsodic, so hypnotic in its effect, that the people who flocked to Niskeyuna in ever greater numbers could only ascribe it to transcendental causes and accept it as evidence that the kingdom of God was truly at hand. The earliest account of a meeting (by one Valentine Rathbun, in 1780) portrayed, indeed, a remarkable scene:

Everyone acts for himself, and almost every one different from the other; one will stand with his arms extended, acting over odd pos-

tures, which they call signs; another will be dancing, and sometimes hopping on one leg about the floor; another will fall to turning around, so swift, that if it be a woman, her clothes will be so filled with the wind, as though they were kept out by a hoop; another will be prostrate on the floor . . . some trembling extremely; others acting as though all their nerves were convulsed; others swinging their arms, with all vigor, as though they were turning a wheel, etc. . . . They have several such experiences in a day, especially on the Sabbath.*

The United Society of Believers in Christ's Second Appearance was to be found in Bolton and Manchester as early as 1747. James and Jane Wardley were the first English Shakers, or as they were first called 'Shaking Quakers.' Their beliefs derived from certain Huguenot sects, notably the Camisards, whose ideas descended in an almost unbroken line since the period of the Albigenian heresy. There was an ancient heretical tradition for dancing as part of the adoration of God. The heterodox Gnostics of the second Christian century conducted the rites of the *Agape* or love feast, with dances. Ritual dancing was supposedly permitted in English churches until 604. Late into the seventeenth century dancing had a part in some Parisian churches and there are further fragmentary survivals notably in Los Seises, the dancing youths of the Cathedral of Seville.

In England, the early Shakers had danced the same way: 'singing, shouting, or walking the floor, under the influence of spiritual signs, shoving each other about — or swiftly passing and repassing each other, like clouds agitated by a mighty wind.' At the rites of the Eucharist primitive Christians had also 'gesticulated with their hands, danced with their feet, flung their bodies about.' The worship of many spiritual sects was similar: the early Quakers and Baptists, the French Prophets, the Merry Dancers of New England, the Kentucky Revivalists, the Girlingtones or Shakers of the New Forest, the Shaker Indians of Puget Sound, the Tremolanti recently expelled from Rome. As with other orders, the Shaker exercises were largely involuntary, charged with emotionalism and characterized by divine 'gifts.'

The period 1780-87 was one of spiritual ferment and proselytism. Ann Lee died in 1784, after spreading her mystic doctrine and establishing ecclesia in various parts of New England and New York. Her successor, Father James Whittaker, died in 1786, soon after he had built the first Shaker meeting-house at New Lebanon. Then, a year later, Joseph Meacham, a New-Light preacher from Enfield, Connecticut, who had been a leader of the Lebanon revival, started to gather the Believers together into socio-industrial religious communities conceived in monastic terms and consolidated by a covenantal agreement.

With the organization of the society in 'church order,' the manner of worship underwent a distinct change. Energies formerly dissipated in incessant travel, disputes with authorities and exhaustive meetings were concentrated on the practical tasks of building communes. A certain reaction from the initial ardours was aided by the desire to placate the world by whom the Shakers had been persecuted, but with whom, if they were to survive as an economic order, they knew they must come to terms. In the eleven communities organized by 1792* the meeting-houses, the first structures erected, were provided with spacious halls for an expanded ritual, with seats along the walls for the 'world's people,' who were prospective converts to the faith. Furthermore, as a believer in order and utility in all things, Father Joseph was opposed to *immoderate* worship, holding such excess to be wasteful of power, purposeless and prejudicial to the gospel. It was probably for the latter reason that he introduced, in 1788, the first distinct dance, 'the square-order shuffle,' patterned according to legend on Meacham's own vision of angels dancing around the throne of God (page 61).

Reflecting the Puritan tradition to which he was heir, the square-order was a solemn exercise, a forward-and-backward movement of ranks, the brethren and sisters in separate groups shuffling towards and away from each other, three paces each way, with a double step or 'tip tap' at the turn. This primitive dance, accompanied by a rhythmic

* Some Brief Hints, of a Religious Scheme. Valentine Rathbun. Norwich (Conn.), 1781.

* See final note.



Shakers near Lebanon, New York. Hand-colored lithograph. Published by A. Imbert, No. 104 Broadway, near Pine Street (ca. 1825). A square-order dance. Later this print was pirated by Currier, Kellogg, etc. Note figure at left representing the "World's People."

but tuneless chant, was an impressive though doubtlessly grotesque performance:

The crowd begin to slowly shove, each person one foot at a time, and to face as soldiers do when training; but every time they turn, they bow, or rather crouch in a very extraordinary and particular manner, bending the body to an almost horizontal posture, the back a little curved, the knees bowing forward, the hands sprawling forward and downward, and the posterior part of each projecting so as to nearly approach the face of the next one.*

In a variant of the square-order introduced in 1788, a livelier measure called 'the square step,'

the assembly advanced four times, three steps at a time, with 'tip taps' at the intervals, 'receding backwards' the same way.

The advent of worded songs, and subsequently of a trained chorus, also had a marked effect on the manner of worship. The Schismatics or Christians of Ohio and Kentucky (Methodists and Baptists, the nuclei out of whom the western Shaker communities^o were formed early in the nineteenth century, had sung revival songs and spirituals in their backwoods meetings, and had been exercised in dancing and other spontaneous or automatic gifts. Recognizing the value of a more animated

* Andrews's *Western Star*, Stockbridge, Mass. September 12, 1796.

^o See final note.

ritual as a means to conversion, the eastern leaders about 1807 began to encourage the adoption and composition of lively songs and dances expressive of the spiritual upsurge which began to sweep over the whole society. The initiative was taken by Lucy Wright (1760-1821), Joseph Meacham's successor as head of the order, whose inspiration was again a vision, but now, one of angels *joyfully* dancing. Mother Lucy rearranged the ranks according to age and position, stepped up the square-order tempo to what was known as 'the skipping manner,' introduced marches (and later ring dances), and in general freed the ritual of its old restrictions. The early posturing of arms and hands, likened to that of 'kangaroos' or 'dancing dogs,' also evolved into more graceful gestures: in one form, by extending the forearms with the hands turned upward as if to receive spiritual blessings, in another, by waving the hands inward as if gathering or dispensing spiritual grace (page 58). The 'back' manner of worship, the 'promiscuous' exercises of the first Shakers, was not discouraged, however. At the height of a meeting, someone (usually a sister) might suddenly step from the ranks and begin to whirl, bow, tremble or run about clapping the hands and shouting; another would follow, and soon the assembly would be turned into a confused mass of sound and movement. Often the presiding elder, after the hymns and exhortations and prescribed rehearsed dances of the regular service, would deliberately begin such exercises with the words, 'Let us labor,' bringing them to a close only when the worshippers were completely exhausted.

Various types of dancing developed in the different localities. Young tells us that at Harvard, Massachusetts, the 'hollow step' was done to a shuffling step, "the two ranks facing each other, on the north and south, advance up towards each other, turn, and return . . . the east and west ranks advance and recede."

By the Civil War, a freshness of movement disappeared with the decreasing power of their mysticism. Lassitude and backsliding set in. No longer was there the 'autointoxication of rapturous movement, that self-forgetful union with the not-self which the mystic ever seeks' (Havelock Ellis). Once the decline started, it was cumulative. The

members could no longer sublimate their desires and take their minds off 'carnal sin,' and they did not possess the determination of Mother Ann, who having four of her children die in infancy and being deserted by her husband, had found that this was God's penalty for sexual intercourse. (Incidentally, God became a double Deity when the principle of absolute equality for women was recognized by the Shakers at the end of the eighteenth century.)

With the organization of singing classes, the adoption of letter musical notation and the appearance of unharmonized manuscript hymnals in the early 1820's a renewed interest in song and its coordination with dancing became evident. They rarely had any singing except in unison. Variants of circular dances, standing dances and shuffles were introduced, as well as elaborations of the marches and square orders. In the round dances the participants would march or skip around a stationary chorus, sometimes facing in and bowing or shuffling at the 'set' part of the tune; or else form a 'continuous ring,' in the shape of the letter C, moving in single or double files in such a manner as to bring every one face to face. This was one type of the so-called 'union dance.' In another, after the brethren and sisters had formed two parallel lines confronting each other, those at the end alternately moved up the rows, to the tune of a union song, grasping the hand of every fellow member. In still another, the sexes shuffled forward and backward in a series of parallel lines, weaving, as it were, a fabric of union and love. Reminiscent of the Virginia reel was a fourth exercise, known in a lively version as 'the checks,' in which groups of brethren and sisters, arranged in a hollow square facing inward, 'labored' up to the opposing group and back.

Shaker music and songs were at first improvisory or 'inspired,' then learned by rote, but later tunes were borrowed from the English hymnody, or Irish, Scotch, French, Bohemian folk sources, and even popular songs and dances of the day. It is yet to be proven that the floor pattern of the Shaker ritual dances borrowed from the elaborate contredances or quadrilles of the 'twenties and 'thirties. When music instruction was introduced the Shakers developed their own composers. A group of singers

and dancers appeared in a Shaker program on the stage of the American Museum in New York for seven weeks in the 'forties, and 'Fi, Hi, Hi The Black Shakers,' a song in the blackface idiom, was performed by the Fellows Ethiopian Troupe of Minstrels in the 1850's.

Dancing as a deliberate and purposive art, it will be noted, was a gradual development. The 'odd postures' and random bizarre exercises of the first meetings were involuntary acts, 'acceptable gifts of God,' many of which, indeed, entered into the traditional ritualism. But as time went on, and in part, perhaps, because the Shakers danced before an audience, there dawned a consciousness of purpose, and with it a tendency to rationalize and justify, as well as to elaborate the gifts. Thus, according to the apologists, the early gifts, being 'mortifying' in character, taught humility and aided in purifying the soul. When a Believer trembled, he was 'shaking off doubts' or 'keeping down the life of the flesh.' Later, spokesmen for the sect, in reply to wide-spread criticism of the dance as a means of worship, had recourse to scriptural precedent, to the examples set by Miriam the Prophetess, by Jephthah's daughter, by the daughters of Shiloh, and by David and all Israel when they danced before the Lord.* Every created faculty, they contended, the hands and feet, the tongue, the whole body, should 'express outwardly and assist the inward reverence of the soul.'

Pantomime, as a means of enriching outward expression, played an increasingly characteristic role as the attitude towards the dance grew more objective. Gestures such as bowing, stamping, whirling, acting out 'signs' (pantomimic gestures, pretending to play orchestral instruments, etc.), originally involuntary, were incorporated into the structure of worship, assuming, to a lesser or greater degree, symbolic meaning. They were known, even from the beginning, by the scriptural term 'gifts.' One had the gift of shaking, turning like a wheel, singing in unknown tongues, healing, prophesying or 'seeing' spirits. Such gifts were often expanded or combined into complex rituals affecting the regular dance movements and devotionism as a whole.

* The Sacred Dance: A Study in Comparative Folklore by W. O. E. Oesterly, D.D. (MacMillan; 1923) gives an elaborate background of Old Testament references.

It is impossible, in fact, to isolate the dance *per se* from the sacraments and ritualistic play, which, in the mountain meetings of the 1840's, reached their most dramatic and fantastic manifestations. The record is an involved one which we will only briefly survey.

Individual 'gifts,' such as bowing and whirling, might be either unwilling or intentional, in the latter case to induce, perhaps, a state of humility or a sense of 'freedom from bondage.' Others, such as 'chasing the Devil,' developed into distinct communal rites. This 'warring gift,' for instance, was originally the accompaniment of a certain 'exercise-song' where, at a given passage, the dancers stamped on an imaginary serpent or devil, plucked the mark of the devil (sometimes called 'Great I' — pride — or 'Old Ugly') from their foreheads, or made signs as if they were mowing down evil spirits or sweeping them from the room. Later, the gift was elaborated. A 'backslider' would be surrounded by the faithful, who, pointing their fingers at the afflicted one, would shout 'woe, woe,' 'dann his devil,' or attempt in other ways to exorcize the corrupting spirit.* Again, during meeting, a sentinel having warned the worshippers that the devil had entered the room, they would drive the intruder off or fire spiritual guns at him. Here, as in much of the pantomime attendant on the great Shaker revival which opened in 1837, a strong element of play was manifest.

During this phenomenal period, lasting over ten years, protracted rituals were common. In one, the 'cleansing gift,' preceded by prayer, fasting and confession, a group of singers and media ('instruments') marched through the dwellings and shops, sweeping and cleaning with spiritual brooms, after which they returned to the place of worship 'to scour and scrub, from its floor, the stains of sin.'

* Cf. the 'proceedings' reported by the apostate Brown in 1812: "Some of them described circles on the floor, around which they would stamp, grin and perform all manner of grimace, and every act of disdain; they then jumped within the ring and stamped with utmost vehemence. . . They considered the circle as representing sin in the world, and their actions round and in it marked their displeasure and abhorrence against sin; and likewise their stamping in the ring with a noise was figurative of the destruction of sin and passing away of the old heavens, according to the scriptural expression, 'as with a great noise.'" (Brown, Thomas: An Account of the People called Shakers . . . Troy, 1812.)

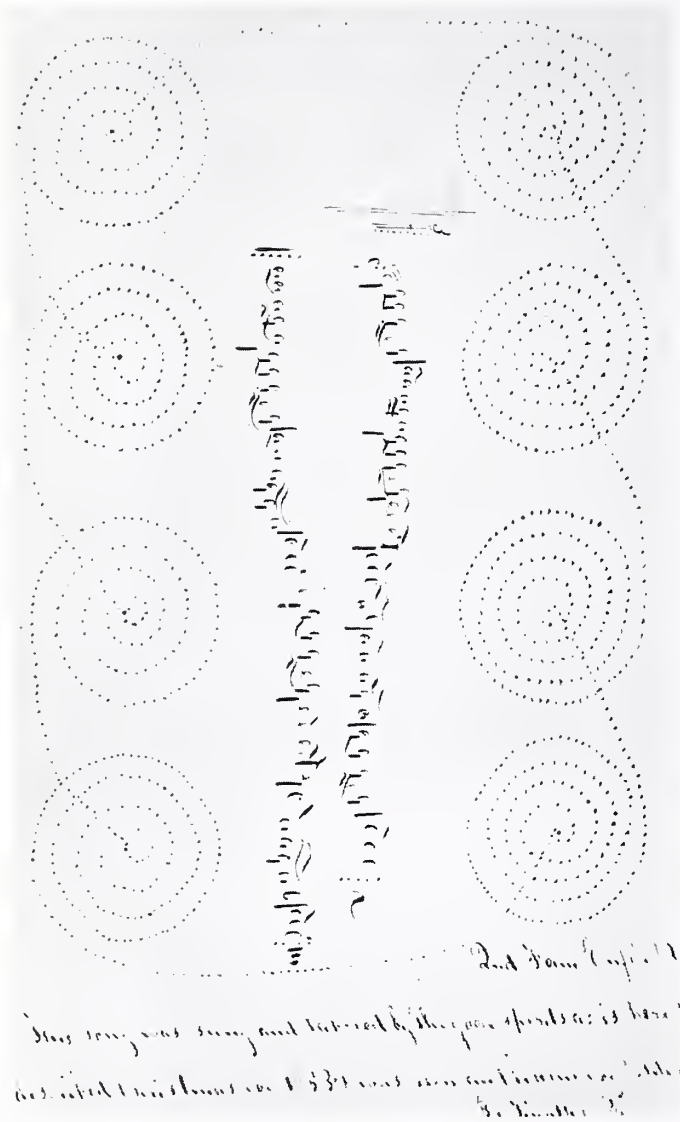


The Dance. Square order. By Benson Lossing. From Harper's New Monthly Magazine, 1857.

In another, known as 'The Midnight Cry,' the members arose at midnight and marched through the halls behind instruments bearing lamps, singing of the Lord of Hosts, who, with a lamp in His hand, had come to search out sin.

To the Shaker ministry, in 1842, came word that meetings should be held semi-annually, in the spring and fall, on the highest elevation in each community. On the evening before the event, colorful spiritual garments were distributed to all. The next day, thus attired, the singing procession marched to the mountain top, where day-long ceremonies were joyfully held around a sacred 'fountain' (cover). The rites were manifold. The instruments were ordained and anointed. Incense was burned in spiritual censers. Imaginary sponges,

dipped in water from the central fountain, were used in cleansing each other's bodies, which were afterwards dried with spiritual towels. In one part of the program, the brethren and sisters paced rhythmically over the clearing, sowing spiritual seed and watering it from vessels of spiritual water. Then, following the example of an instrument or leader, they would enact some gift of mortification, 'acting the fool,' singing silly songs or indulging in various grotesqueries. Presents and rewards were frequently exchanged: chains of comforts, balls of love, robes of purity, baskets of flowers, fans of truth, bowls of wine, gospel trumpets, singing birds, precious stones, leaves from the tree of life, and so on — with appropriate gestures by the giver and recipient. After many songs, dances and revelations



2nd Fam(ily) Enfield

This song was sung and labored by the good spirits as is here described Christmas eve 1853 and was seen and learned by Elder

Br(other) R

In Shaker parlance it would be called "a noted song" since it is without words. The chart outlines the course of a file of marchers describing a series of circles.

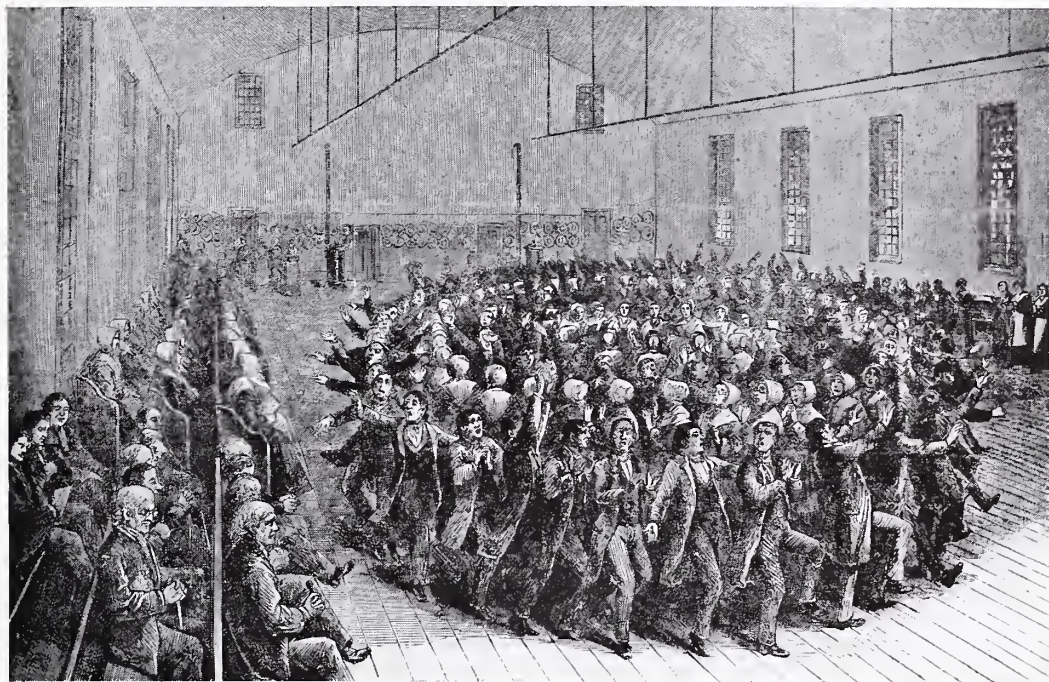
by the 'instruments,' the mountain meetings closed with a love-feast, a sumptuous repast of the rarest and most delicious foods and wines. Though all was make-believe, those who partook of the sacraments left the feast-grounds refreshed in body and soul.

'Mother Ann's Second Appearing,' as this period (ca. 1845) was called, was productive of many 'eccentric' dances and songs. The most curious, perhaps, arose from the belief that the spirits of the departed of many nations, such as Lafayette, Mahomet and Napoleon, and of various Indian tribes in particular, perhaps the adjacent Iroquois or Algonquin, returned to the Shaker meetings to learn the way of God.* Here their presence actually transformed behaviour. If the visitors were Indian spirits, the subjects 'possessed' would sing versions of native songs or dance in Indian fashion. The reception of negro spirits would be similarly heralded by songs in the appropriate dialect, of a Scotch company by Scotch songs or a highland fling, of a group of Eskimos by pantomime in imitation of northlanders driving dogs-sleds over the snow. And so on. The adoption of Indians and negroes did not lessen the vigor of the dance. The gifts attendant on such visitations were of course spontaneous, belonging to the same category as the early 'promiscuous' dances or the exercises following the drinking of spiritual wine. Hundreds of Indian' and 'negro' songs, 'drinking' songs, 'vision' and 'gift' songs were composed for the occasion.

The feast-days on the mountains, the Christmas services in the family dwellings and those sabbath-day meetings which were closed to the world in the early 1840's, were, in fact, extravaganzas and planned for audiences. A profound sense of destiny, however, vitalized the order during the revival years, resulting in a heightened consciousness of the holiness of worship. The 'holy laws,** hitherto an oral or secret code, were now written down for the 'protection' of all, requiring Believers, among other injunctions,

* Throughout its history, the United Society welcomed all nationalities. 'Families' of negroes were organized in the Kentucky communities; at one time there was a small negro order in Philadelphia; and A. Imbert's lithograph of the Shakers dancing shows two negroes among the brethren. In Ohio the Believers sent missions to the Shawnee Indians.

** Millennial Laws, or Gospel Statutes and Ordinances. . . Recorded at New Lebanon, 1821. Revised . . . 1845. Ms.



The Shakers in Niskeyuna. Religious Exercises. Wheel-within-a-wheel dance. Possibly drawn by Joseph Becker. From Leslie's Popular Monthly, 1885.

to retire to their rooms in silence for the space of half an hour, and labor for a sense of the gospel, before attending meeting . . .

to sit erect in straight ranks in retiring time and . . . attend to the reading of the hymn or anthem that is to be sung in meeting . . .

by the order of God, not to present themselves to worship Him, when under the condemnation of sin unconfessed. But . . . to present themselves to worship with clean hands and pure heart and justified conscience . . .

to go into meeting in the fear of God, walking upon the toes, and two abreast . . . keeping step together.

Maintenance of order and union was expressly charged:

When brethren and sisters place themselves in a body in meeting . . . the ranks should be strait, not only to the right and left, but also forward and back. Forward ranks should always

be as long as any of the rest, and by no means should there be variance in the ranks, it has a tendency to excite disunion.

So regular were the ranks and so perfect the discipline that the marches — except for the 'powerful enchantment' and the 'bounding, elastic step, quite different from that of the soldier of the world' — suggested to many the movement of troops.

Variants of the square and ring dances were common during the 'Great Revival': lively lines, finished crosses, the square and compass, the moving square, the double square, the changeable dance, mother's star, the diamond, and others — performed to special songs and involving, as did most Shaker exercises, much repetition of movement. All the dances assumed a new significance. The devotees felt that they were indeed marching heavenward,

that the circle was the perfect emblem of their union. The 'wheel-within-a-wheel,' three or more concentric circles turning in alternate directions around a central chorus (page 63), became a figure of the all-inclusiveness of their gospel: the outer ring the ultimate circle of truth, the Shaker dispensation; the singers, the harmony and perfection of God that were at the heart of life. In another exercise, 'The Narrow Path,' a single file of dancers, with heads bowed, placed one foot before the other as they trod the narrow way to salvation. The earnestness and sincerity of worship, with its graceful movements, the noble symbolism in the gesturing of the hands, and its recognition 'of the symbolical nature of all outward life,' impressed many an observer sensitive to the implications of liturgy.

By the middle of the century the dance had reached its fullest development. What it was like then, and how different from the noisy 'heavy dancing' of Rathbun's day, may best be seen in an eye-witness account of a typical meeting. The author was the artist, Benson Lossing.* Reference is to the square-order and two ring dances:

The worshipers all turned their backs to the audience, except those of the two wall rows, and commenced a backward and forward march, or dance, in a regular springing step, keeping time to the music of their voices, while their hands hung closely to their sides. The wall rows alone kept time with their hands moving up and down, the palms turned upward. The singing appeared like a simple refrain and a chorus of too-ral-loo, too-ral-loo, while all the movements with hand, foot, and limb were extremely graceful. . .

The worshipers . . . formed themselves in serried ranks as before. Then, with graceful motions, they gradually changed their position into circular form, all the while moving with springing step, in unison with a lively tune. In the centre stood twenty-four singers in a circle, twelve men and twelve women; and around them, in two concentric circles, marched and counter-marched the remainder of the worshipers, the men three and the women two abreast. A brief pause and they commenced another lively tune and march, all keeping time with their hands moving up and down, and occasionally clapping them three or four times in concert. The women were now three and the men two abreast. . . The music was unlike

anything I had ever heard; beautiful, impressive, and deeply solemn. . .

The worshipers now formed four circles, with the singers as the central one, and held each other by the hand, the men and women separately. These circles symbolized the four great Dispensations. . . In this hymn they sang of Union, as exhibited by their linked hands; and when it had ceased they all lifted up their hands, and gave a subdued shout — the shout of victory — the final victory of Christ in all the earth, and the triumphs of the Shaker, or Millennial Church. . .

Their movements in the dance or march, whether natural or studied, are all graceful and appropriate; and as I gazed upon that congregation of four or five hundred worshipers marching and countermarching in perfect time, I felt certain that, were it seen upon a stage as a theatrical exhibition, the involuntary exclamation of even the hypercritical would be, 'How beautiful!'

An analogy may be drawn between the worship of the Shakers and their handicraft. In the beginning workmanship was somewhat crude, consisting of experimental attempts to achieve forms satisfying to the communal mind and conscience. Eventually a specific type of furniture and architecture emerged, pure in line, rightly proportioned, suited in every way to the needs of the order. But though Shaker design was the acme of simplicity, and free of all 'superfluity' and dross, it was yet possible to create endless combinations and variations of the elements of which it was composed. So in the dance. The steps were made more graceful, postures were refined, and the original linear and circular movements developed into finished, precise manoeuvres. The wheeling of ranks had the same polished but simplified perfection as the turning on the posts of a table or chair. The dualism of Shaker life and doctrine was reflected not only in its artisanship, in the way many houses and much furniture of the 'joint inheritance' were constructed, but in its ritual, in the symmetrical disposition of the sexes and the balanced performance of separate corps. In both cases, motivation was deeply religious.

The element of inner conflict, the inevitable attribute of a religious culture, also influenced the ritual. The life of the Believers was a war between flesh and spirit, a struggle to suppress or sublimate

* The Shakers. (Lossing, Benson). Harper's New Monthly Magazine, July, 1857.



Promiscuous dance. An evening meeting by lamp-light. A glimpse of the 'back-manner' of dancing. Wood-engraving by A. Boyd Houghton (1836-1875). From the *London Graphic*, 1870.

desires and normal instincts. The code of separation alienated them from kith and kin. The principle of celibacy parted the sexes. Social and worldly intercourse were carefully controlled. Humility, plainness in dress and speech, consecrated labor, doctrinal meditation, the submergence of self for the common good — all were cardinal virtues. And though the worshipers could find spiritual recreation and release in the songs and dances, though the urge to break through the prescribed 'manners' and frolic, embrace and dance alone (page 65) was often irresistible, even these tendencies were affected by ingrained habits of order and obedience. The effect of such opposition of forces was

to imbue the exercises of worship with a quality of tension, unpredictability, and meanings partly veiled. The dance was a virginal expression, but not without dynamic physical character.

For what it both revealed and suggested the ritual thus symbolized the peculiar genius of the order: its belief in the actuality of good and evil, its primitive credulity, its awareness of spiritual presences, its sublime motives, its persistent search for perfection. Until they were abandoned early in the present century, the songs and dances were the signs of this seeking, of the struggle to realize, in a world of reality, an ideal communion.

NOTES ON SETTING AND COSTUME

Setting. The assembly room in the meeting-house was a large rectangular hall, unfurnished except for the benches built along one wall, the tiers of seats or platform for the 'world's people' on the opposite side, and the moveable backless forms used at the beginning of the service. In the daytime the light from many windows illuminated the white plastered walls, along which rows of greenish-blue peg-boards extended in colorful relief. The moldings along the top of the walls, the paneled doors and window-casings, and the plain dado were painted this same rich hue, forming a striking background for the deep reds or yellows of the benches. Floor markings guided the votaries in the execution of intricate dances. Candle sconces or oil lamps, shedding at night a flickering, eerie light, hung from the ceiling or were placed at intervals along the walls. In the winter the room was heated by long wood-burning 'box' stoves, one at each end of the hall. The absence of all but necessary furnishings, the pure colors and the airy spaciousness and serenity of this interior, marked it as a holy place, the inner court of the Shaker temple.

Costume. For about twenty years after the Shaker church was organized, the sabbath 'uniform' of the brethren consisted of a blue, full-length coat, with a cape lying flat to the shoulders, cut straight in front and extending to the knees; a blue jacket; a blue or white stock buckled behind; black or blue 'lasting' breeches strapped, buckled or buttoned over long stockings just below the knee; and calf-skin shoes with straps and brass shoe-buckles. Blue sleeve-strings were worn in the dance, when the coats were usually taken off. For them blue was the most 'heavenly' of colors.

Light-colored striped short 'gowns,' with sleeves extending just below the elbow were worn in summer, during the same period, by the sisterhood. Over the gown was a checked apron of homespun linen, bound in white, with white tape-strings tied in front. Under the gown was a black (later a blue) worsted petticoat. The fine lawn or linen caps, secured to the fillet by a pin, could be tied with tape-strings under the chin. The 'shoulder handkerchiefs,' which were always a characteristic feature of the sisters' dress, were at first (for sabbath wear) black silk, and later white lawn, home-woven, neatly spread and pinned over the shoulders. The shoes were of cloth, with wooden heels. In winter, the sisters wore long gowns, of butternut-colored worsted, to meeting. These were fitted snugly to the back and hips, with plaited cuffs fitted to the bend of the arm, and box plaits behind. The aprons were blue or white checked, the kerchiefs blue cotton with white borders.

Early in the last century the style changed. Summer gowns for sisters under 40 or 50 were white cotton, short-waisted and plaited behind (and later at the sides), with aprons of the same cloth attached

in front. (The older sisters used a striped material.) For a brief period the kerchiefs were drab, soon replaced by hand-woven silk dyed in lovely soft colors. Shoes were of blue prunella. Linen or cotton pocket handkerchiefs, or 'napkins' — blue and white, copperas and white, or white with blue borders — were folded over the arm in the exercise of worship, and placed neatly on the lap during the intervals between dances.

Developments in Shaker cloth manufacture and dyeing also affected the brethren's clothes. For a while the trousers were of a gray mixture in winter, and blue and white checked linen or cotton in summer. Later the trousers were nutgall-dyed, and the coats and jackets colored drab. Hooks replaced buttons, white silk neck-cloths substituted for stocks, and strings for buckles on the shoes. About 1830 'the feelings had become so set for blue' that both summer and winter jackets, for sabbath wear, were changed from drab to fine-blue fulled cloth, and later to light blue, fine-wail worsteds.

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

'Songs, Dances and Rituals of the American Shakers' (published by J. J. Augustin, N.Y., 1940, under the title, 'The Gift to be Simple') is to date the only book in the present field. Based largely on manuscript sources, this work gives the music of seventy-nine and the texts of over two hundred songs, several dance charts and illustrations of dances, rituals and hand-written hymnals. See also 'Shaker Songs,' *The Musical Quarterly*, N.Y., October, 1937. (Both by Edward D. Andrews.)

The Believers themselves have had little to say on the subject of their interesting religious arts. One document only has much to contribute to our knowledge of the development of ritualism: Isaac N. Youngs' unpublished 'A Concise View of the Church of God and Of Christ, On Earth . . .', completed at New Lebanon in 1856. To this may be added the chapter, 'Remarks on the Worship of God: the origin, practice and reasonableness of Dancing, as an act of Divine Worship,' in 'A Summary View of the Millennial Church, or United Society of Believers . . .', by Calvin Green and Seth Y. Wells. (Albany, 1823.) Other Shaker sources, in print and manuscript, are listed in the bibliography of 'The Gift to be Simple.'

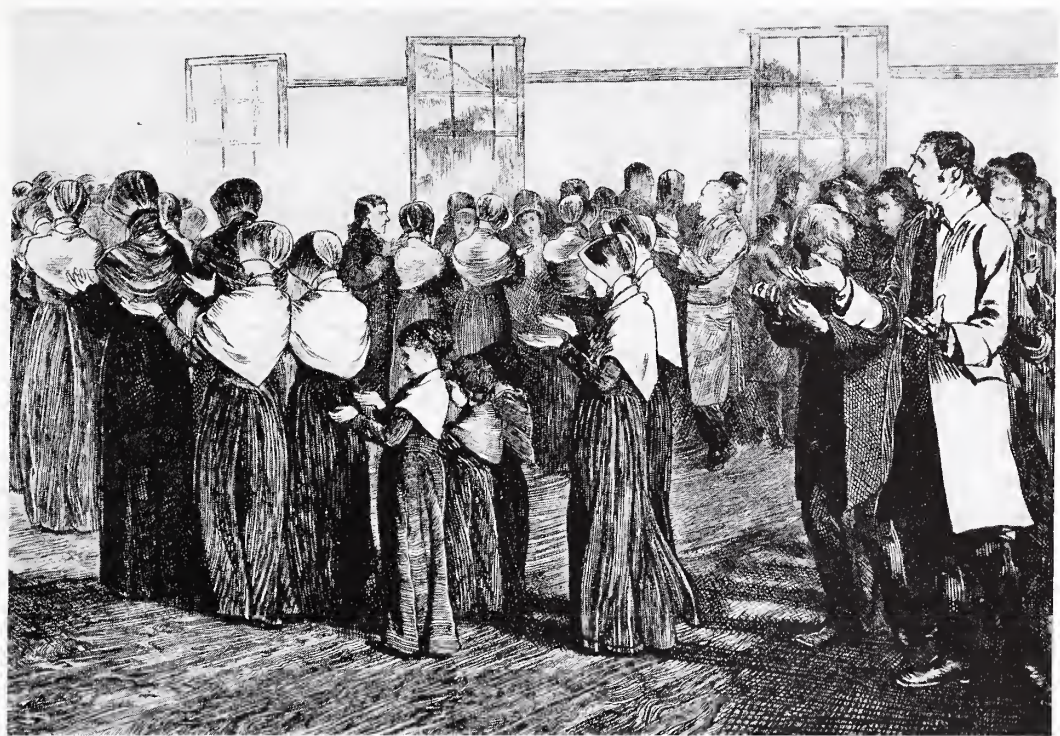
References to Shaker worship are scattered through the travel and historical literature of the eighteenth and nineteenth century. The following are selected as perhaps the most informative:

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Shakers at Meeting. The Final Procession. A march. Wood-engraving by Houghton. From the *London Graphic*, 1870. This English illustrator of the *Arabian Nights* found his only sympathetic subject in America in the Shakers.

Extract from an unpublished manuscript on Shaker history, giving an accurate description of their songs, dances, marches, visions, visits to the spirit land, etc. By an eye-witness. Boston, 1850.

Greeley, Horace. *A Sabbath with the Shakers. The Knickerbocker*, or New York Monthly Magazine. New York, 1838.

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Munsell, Joel (ed.) *Collections on the History of Albany*. Albany, 1867. (Contains an account by the phrenologist George Combe, of a visit to the Niskeyuna Shakers in 1839.)

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Original Shaker Communities in New England, The. (The Plumer Papers. Frank Sanborn, ed.) *The New England Magazine*, 1900.

Taylor, Amos. *A Narrative of the Strange Principles, Conduct and Character of the People known by the Name of Shakers*. Worcester, 1782.

Tudor, Henry. *Narrative of a Tour in North America*. London, 1834.

Shaker communities were located in New York state at New Lebanon, Watervliet (Niskeyuna) and Groveland; in Massachusetts, at Hancock, Tyringham, Shirley and Harvard; in Connecticut, at Enfield; in New Hampshire, at Canterbury and Enfield; in Maine, at New Gloucester (Sabbathday Lake) and Alfred; in Ohio, at Union Village, White-water, Watervliet and North Union; in Kentucky, at Pleasant Hill and South Union; and in Indiana, at West Union (Busro). Except for the one at Groveland, formerly located at Sodus Bay, New York, all the New York and New England communities were organized by 1792. The societies in the middle west were established within the first thirty years of the nineteenth century. There are small surviving colonies today at New Lebanon, Hancock, Canterbury and Sabbathday Lake.

Scores and Discs

Recent discs of interest include Latin Rhythms, played and sung by an Ecuadorian Trio, Las Tres Guitares, Musicraft Album Number 56. Popular dances in 3/4 time from Argentina, Chile, Colombia, and Ecuador are represented.

Perhaps the outstanding is El Demonio (the demon), a Chilean Cueca. It has a prelude of sixteen bars and then four stanzas with a remarkable harmonic progression. One is placed in an atmosphere charged with emotion — without chichi. To say the emotion seems stylized, though for Chileans it undoubtedly is not, is rather to define than to criticize. The Colombian Bambuco, Grato Silencio, makes gay use of the flute to depict a flirtation which alternately warms and cools. Its structure is based on the familiar four bar phrase, but with a different concept of major and minor. Treble and bass guitars supply a variety of color. An Ecuadorian Pasillo (short step) of Mozartian charm is Me Perico in which the flute again has the lead. The langorous Sanjuanito in 6/8 is named after the Spanish colonists' patron saint. The rhythm of the gigue is evident in the Argentinian Chacera, or chatter, a song and dance of the pampas.

Eight of Jean Morel Campos' two hundred Puerto Rican danzas are recorded in Victor's M855 by Jesus Maria Sanroma, a Puerto Rican himself. Derived from the folk Upas as well as Spanish sources, these danzas radiate the charm of European capitals

in the latter nineteenth century. One sounds definitely like movie music of the early 1900's (Wicked Love); others seem Brahmsian (Happy Days), or Lisztian (Sublime Soul). All have preludes of sixteen bars, usually repeated, and then in 3/4 time comes the slow or rhythmic phrases of the danza. Best of all is one called Don't Touch Me, a frolicsome game of tag, which sounds very much like Spivey, of Spivey's roof.

Other recent recordings of South American music include two albums issued by the Museum of Modern Art, the Brazilian Album (Columbia C83) which was recorded under the supervision of Leopold Stokowski, and Musicraft's Album No. 57.

Aaron Copland's *Billy the Kid* is probably the outstanding music for a North American ballet. It is terse, tense and quietly moving, even outside the theatre. Created for the Ballet Caravan in 1938 with choreography by Loring and decors by French, it is again in the news, for Dance Players is now presenting a two-piano version which may do for American ballet what *The Green Table* did for European. Recently Boosey and Hawkes also issued a piano arrangement of *El Salon Mexico* (already choreographed by Dorothy Barret) and *Homage to Paderewski*, a collection of sixteen piano pieces, many in dance forms, written by Milhaud, Bartok, Nin-Culmell, Rathaus and other musicians living in the United States.

— B.H.

Almanac

MAY

1. Continuation of Eastern District Association Health and Physical Education Convention.
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania
Ruth St. Denis. St. Denis Studio. New York City
Graff Ballet. Jan Veen Studio Hall. Boston, Massachusetts (also 2nd)
2. Angna Enters. San Diego, California
3. Dudley, Maslow, Bales. Y.M.H.A. New York City
6. Angna Enters. Palo Alto, California
9. Angna Enters. Exhibition of paintings. Beverly Hills, California
11. Folk Dance Congress. New York City
13. Lillian Moore and Albertina Vitak. Lecture-recital: Introduction to the Ballet. Manchester, New Hampshire